



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING READING AND WRITING COMPETITIONS

15th December 2015



RTS Teacher Effectiveness (TE) Series # 8

1. Introduction

The purpose of the reading and writing competitions is to create a reading culture and encourage schools, zones and Districts to hold similar opportunities for children to practice reading. The reading and writing competitions are important because, apart from listening and speaking, reading and writing are critical skills for children in early grades because the two skills facilitate full development of comprehension and expression abilities.

USAID/Read to Succeed (RTS) Midline Survey results for 2014 showed that many learners had weak reading and comprehension skills, which makes it difficult for them to read to learn. In order to further develop learners' reading and writing skills, RTS encourages regular and ongoing practice about what learners are taught in class.

One way to motivate learners to read and write is to engage them in Reading and Writing Competitions. Among other reading and writing activities, RTS has advocated for reading and writing competitions in all its target schools with a view to promoting a culture of reading. RTS believes that the competitions will attract efforts by different players in the education sector that will lead to promotion of a reading culture in schools.

Seeing that reading and writing competitions are a priority, RTS has a deliberate plan for ensuring that the competitions become a regular activity in schools.

Therefore, this brief outlines the process of how schools will conduct competitions, roles and responsibilities for organizing the competitions and the proposed time frame in which schools will hold the competitions. If successfully implemented, this model can be re duplicated by the MoGE at school and zone level beyond RTS Project duration.

2. The Process

The following is the process that will be followed at school, zone and District levels for conducting reading competitions:

2.3. School-level Reading Competitions

All 1,234 RTS supported schools should be encouraged to conduct reading, writing and comprehensions for all Grade 2 learners in the school. From the competitions, the school will identify two best learners (1 boy and 1 girl) who will take part in the competitions that will be held at the Zone Center School.

The school competitions will be organized by Head Teachers and will take place in the first term of 2016. In order to standardize the tests, each school will prepare the competition based on the following criteria:

a) **Reading Competition:** This is an individually administered test where learners will be asked to perform reading and comprehension tasks. The following is a criteria for setting reading and writing tests at school level:

i. **Reading Test:**

- 5 words (5 marks)
- 1 sentence of 5 words long (5 marks)
- A short passage of three sentences. Each sentence should be 6 words long (18 marks)
- 2 comprehension questions based on the short passage read (2 marks)

Total Score: **30 marks**

ii. **Writing Test:**

- 5 words for dictation
- 1 sentence of 5 words long for dictation (5 marks)
- Free writing of 2 sentences about what learners see in the picture. Each sentence should have a maximum of 5 words. Each correct sentence written legibly, correctly and with meaning will carry 5 marks (10 marks)

Total Score: **20 marks**

A classroom will be used where a panel of three judges will administer the reading and three judges will administer the writing competitions. For reading competition, one judge will administer word reading, another, sentence reading and the other will ask the comprehension questions. The words and sentence can be written on a flash card while the short passage can be written on the board or flip chart.

After the reading competition, the learners can move to another class where the writing competition will take place. One judge will administer the dictation test of 5 words, another will administer the dictation test for the sentence and the other will administer the free writing competition. If one classroom is used for both reading and writing competitions, congestion must be avoided. A score sheet similar to the one used for assessing learners in class will be used to record marks. At the end of the competition, the judges will come together to compile the results and identify the best, one boy and one girl.

The reading competition should be publicized so that parents and members of the community can attend to see how their Grade 2 children are reading.

There are some schools with a large number of Grade 2 learners. In such cases, a school may not administer the test to all learners in a day. Therefore, schools are advised to shortlist learners to a number that is manageable by using assessment scores or end of term tests.

In addition, a school that is understaffed may ask for assistance of some teachers who may belong to the panel of judges.

2.4. Zone Level Competitions

- a) The ZEST (Zone Head Teacher, Zone In-service Coordinator and a School In-service Coordinator) based at the zone will be responsible to prepare and conduct the one-day Reading, Writing and Comprehension competitions. Each zone will prepare a Zonal Plan indicating when and how they will conduct the competitions. The Zonal Plan will be subject to approval by the PTA or School Community Partnership Committees and a copy sent to District Education Support Team and Province (PEST and RTS Provincial Team. Once it is known that the plan has been approved, the zone will go ahead to hold the competitions).
- b) The zone will receive a package of competition questions few days before the competition. The envelope will only be opened on the day of the completion in front of a panel of judges. The competitions at zone level will be conducted just like the way it is conducted at school level in one or more classrooms where the learners will first do the reading and comprehension competition by moving from one panel judge to another and move on to the writing competition.

The competition for both reading and writing will have the same format as the one conducted at school. Total score for reading and comprehension will be 30 marks and total score for writing will be 20 marks, totalling 50 marks. The Zone will identify from the competition two best learners (1 boy and 1 girl) who will compete in the District competitions.

The Zone will determine prizes for the best boy, best girl and second and third runners up that will be awarded. Other learners and schools must be appreciated for taking part in the competitions. The zones are expected to have the process of having the zone plan approved and conducting the competitions within term 2 of 2016.

- c) The zone will ensure that the two children coming from each school for the competition are accompanied by a teacher with consent from the parents or guardians. The best girl and the best boy will take part in the District competitions that will be held in September 2016 during the Literacy Week.
- d) The competitions should be open to the public so that parents, guardians, members of the community and community leaders can be invited to see how their children are reading. A community Leader may be Guest of Honor to give out prizes or tokens of appreciation at the end of the competition.

2.5. District Level Competitions

The District competitions will take place in September 2016 during the Literacy Week. The competitions will be organized by the DEST and will be held on the selected day but within the Literacy Week. During that week, the District will receive a prepared envelope that will contain the competition tasks for reading, comprehension and writing.

The tests will have the same format and based on 30 scores for reading and 20 scores for writing competition, total score will be 50. The best boy and the best girl from each zone in the district will take part in the competition. The competitors will be accompanied by a teacher or parent or guardian.

The names of competitors will be received by the District in advance from the zone so that the District can also help to follow up on the learners that will be participating. Members of the public should be invited to see how learners are fairing in the competitions. If possible, the media should also be invited.

Each zone must also bring to the District at least three best stories written by learners or teachers to the District competitions. This should be classified as a factual, fiction or poems.

3. Display and Selection of Good Stories

The reading and writing competitions can also be used to display and select good stories written by the teachers or learners. If the purpose of the reading and writing competition is to create a reading culture and encourage schools, zones and Districts to create an environment that gives opportunities for children to practice reading, then it is also important to share how the children's reading will be sustained by using locally produced stories.

Each school can bring to the competition three best stories. One story should be a factual story (e.g. on environment, health, education, etc...), another story should be a fiction story (e.g. The Lion and the Hunter, Kalulu ad tortoise, etc...) and the other book should contain a series of poems, riddles, songs or a combination of the three genres.

All the books should be written in local languages. The stories can be displayed in a separate room from where the competitions will be taking place so that members of the public and parents can view them. A panel of Judges at the zone can be instituted to select again three best story books of the same category for the District competitions.

At each District, the best three stories of the same category will also be selected and will be collected by RTS Provincial Team Leaders. The stories will be handed over to CDC for approval and consideration for printing.

4. The Role of RTS in the Competitions

As a partner, RTS will support the MoGE at school, Zone and District levels by providing technical support and ensure effective and successful implementation of the competitions. This means that the provincial staff will work closely with MoGE officials to prepare for the competitions. The following will be the key roles that RTS will play:

- a) RTS will work with DRCCs to organize and coordinate the competitions through DEBS Office. Messages will be disseminated through various fora using mainly the respective DEBS offices. The DRCCs could be the main actors in the message delivery to Zone heads. The Zonal Head Teachers may conduct various meetings such as during the HIM Meetings and other workshops so that they are given sufficient information and understand the importance of the activity, how to organize the competitions and roles that teachers will play during the day of competitions.
- b) Each Zone needs to come up with a plan of how to organize the competitions. RTS will provide technical assistance and advice in determining the content of the competitions. The action plan needs to be endorsed by the PTA Chairperson and/or by the School Community Partnership Committee to ensure that the process of planning is inclusive to all. Zones with approved action plans will receive K1, 500 grants for holding the competitions as a cost share. While districts will receive K2, 000 grants per zone for holding district competitions as a cost share. The grant will be disbursed to the zone through the DEBS' office.
- c) RTS will also collect three best stories selected by each district on behalf of CDC so that the stories can be considered for approval and printing by MoGE.
- d) Additionally, RTS will prepare Certificate of Recognition for best schools and best learners.

5. Proposed Schedule for Holding Reading and Writing Competitions

Location	Activity	Time frame	Responsible
School	Prepare test items for reading and writing competitions for Grade 2 learners	February 2016	Head Teacher
	Hold reading competitions	March 2016	Head Teacher
Zone Competitions	Develop zone plan for holding reading competitions	January 2016	ZEST
	Plan approved by PTA/Community Mobilization Committee	February 2016	ZEST
	RTS Provincial Team Leader gets copy of approved plan through DEBS & compiles list of zones with approved plans	March 2016	Zone Head Teacher and DRCC
	Hold reading and writing competitions at zone level	May – July 2016	ZEST
	Names of the winning boy and girl submitted to DEBS office	By 5 th August 2016	Zone Head Teacher
District Competitions	Compile list of learners taking part in competitions from zones	By 5 th August 2016	DESO/ DRCC
	Prepare for the District reading competitions	August 2016	DEST
	Hold reading competitions	19 – 30 Sept. 2016	DEST



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